

REFLECTION AND REFORM

Professionalism and Ethics in the U.S. Army Officer Corps, 1968-1975

by Erik Blaine Riker-Coleman

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ABSTRACT

**ERIK BLAINE COLEMAN. Reflection and Reform: Professionalism and Ethics in the U.S. Army Officer Corps, 1968-1975.
(Directed by Dr. Richard H. Kohn)**

In the later stages of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army faced increasing indications of unethical and unprofessional behavior in the officer corps. In order to better understand the situation, the Army initiated a process of self-study which uncovered further evidence of a breakdown in the professional knowledge and ethical standards of Army officers. Perceiving a connection between the officer corps' lack of professionalism and the service's mounting crisis of indiscipline and poor morale, the Army enacted numerous reforms in an effort to improve the ethical behavior of the officer corps. The reform process achieved positive results but remained incomplete because Army leaders were reluctant to acknowledge the full scope of the problem.

In March of 1969, an ex-serviceman named Ron Ridenhour sent numerous members of Congress and the press copies of a letter relating details of an apparent war crime committed by U.S. Army troops. Ridenhour, an aspiring journalist, wrote of a place called "Pinkville" where a year previously American troops of the 11th Brigade had deliberately murdered several hundred civilians. Ridenhour's detailed allegations, assembled from stories that he had heard from soldiers who had been present, were disturbing enough to U.S. Representatives Mendel Rivers and Morris Udall that they called for an inquiry into the matter by the Department of Defense. What came to be known as the My Lai Massacre (a misnomer, as My Lai was just a subhamlet of a larger village named Son My which encompassed the area within which the killings took place), one of the worst atrocities ever committed by American troops, came to light not through official channels but through the efforts of an individual draftee.¹ At Son My, officers of all ranks had failed to do their duty and had been complicit in trying to cover the incident up. Independent of the damage that the atrocity and subsequent cover-up did to the Army's reputation, the Son My incident raised serious concerns about the professional and ethical standards of the U.S. Army officer corps. The failure of leadership that surrounded the events at Son My in March of 1968 cast doubt upon the professional ethics of the officer corps at large. While the Army would be scarred for years by My Lai, however, the tragedy provided a major impetus for introspection and movement toward progressive changes within the officer corps.²

¹ Col. George Walton, *The Tarnished Shield: A Report on Today's Army* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1973), 110-111; In an interview in 1977, Lieutenant General William R. Peers, the Army's chief investigator in the My Lai/Son My case, said that, "if Ridenhour hadn't written a letter, I don't know whether it would have come to light or not, very frankly, because a lot of the people who had participated in it were very reluctant to even talk about it or even think about it." In William R. Peers, "The William R. Peers Papers: Recollections and Reflections: Transcript of debriefing of General Peers, 1977," (Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 1977), Sec.IV, 33-34.

² Lt. Gen. William R. Peers, *Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident: Volume I--The Report of the Investigation* [subsequently referred to as *Peers Inquiry*], Washington, D.C. (Department of the Army, 14 March 1970), pp. 12.3-12.4. The Peers Inquiry, the product of a special investigation ordered by the Chief of Staff of the Army, William Westmoreland, constitutes the most comprehensive investigation into the massacre and the events surrounding it.

My Lai, though perhaps the Army's most publicized failure in Vietnam, was part of a larger pattern of serious problems within the Army during the later years of the Vietnam war. After 1968, the Army found itself coping with racial tension, drug abuse, desertion, assaults on officers, anti-war activism in the ranks, and a variety of other difficulties. Some of the Army's troubles in Vietnam were the products of the unique political and military environment in which the war was fought, while others had been brewing for years before the strain of going to war brought them to the surface. Waning public support for the war in the wake of the Communists' surprising "Tet" offensive in January of 1968 certainly played a role in the breakdown of Army discipline. The increasing rejection of traditional authority among American youth also complicated the Army's position. Time and again, military leaders reminded the nation that the Army was a reflection of the nation which it served. In the end, however, the Army had to acknowledge that inadequate leadership had contributed to many of its problems in Vietnam. This paper seeks to explain how the Army understood its Vietnam-era professional failures, and how this understanding shaped subsequent efforts to address these problems.

The shock of My Lai led the Army's leadership to reexamine the professional and ethical behavior of the officer corps. A series of internal inquiries conducted during the early 1970s pointed to significant shortcomings in the professional climate within the officer corps. These investigations revealed that many officers lacked the technical knowledge and skills that their jobs required, and that many failed to live up to the Army's ethical standards. As one of the more important studies concluded in 1970:

The existing climate [within the officer corps] includes persistent and rather ubiquitous overtones of: selfish behavior that places personal success ahead of the good of the service; looking upward to please superiors instead of looking downward to fulfill the legitimate needs of subordinates; preoccupation with the attainment of trivial short-term objectives even through dishonest practices that injure the long-term fabric of the organization; incomplete communications between junior and seniors which leave the senior uninformed and the junior

feeling unimportant; and inadequate technical or managerial competence to perform effectively the assigned duties.³

Facing increasing evidence that Army policies, especially the service's career progression system and the officer corps' internal culture, were among the major causes of the breakdown of professionalism in Vietnam, the service's senior leaders faced the difficult task of rebuilding the Army in the postwar period.

The increased concern for professional ethics that emerged in the wake of the My Lai investigation was central to both the Army's subsequent understanding of the difficult war and the service's postwar efforts to revitalize itself. The post-My Lai studies clearly enhanced the Army's awareness of the nature of its problems. While senior officers continued to adhere to the notion that civilian mismanagement played a large part in the Vietnam ordeal, the inadequacies in the Army officer corps unearthed by the service's introspection led officers to acknowledge the effects of the failure of Army leadership. Emerging evidence of a connection between the poor state of leadership in the Army and the Army's personnel policies and career development practices for officers led to changes in Army policy. Thereafter, the Army sought to address the deficiencies in ethical behavior and professionalism of officers, altering its policies in an effort to avoid a recurrence of the service's Vietnam downfall. While the rebuilding process ultimately proved even more complex than the Army leadership imagined in the late stages of the war, the growing awareness of ethical and professional issues resulting from the service's self-study played a positive role in motivating needed reforms between 1970 and 1975.

The Crisis:

The United States Army is undergoing the most trying period of its long history.... the situation constitutes a manifold crisis.

--Lt. Col. William Hauser⁴

³ U.S. Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 30 June 1970), 13 [cited henceforth as USAWC, *Study on Military Professionalism*].

⁴ William L. Hauser, *America's Army in Crisis: A Study in Civil-Military Relations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 1.

The depth of the Army's difficulties in Vietnam was such that many observers came to believe that retreat from Vietnam was the only thing that saved the service from complete collapse; while the reality of the situation may have been somewhat less drastic, the fact remains that Army discipline had reached a distressingly low level by 1971.⁵ From 1968 onward, the Army experienced increasing incidence of indiscipline, a trend that culminated in 1971 in a service wracked by widespread drug use, racial violence, desertion, AWOL, and outright refusal to follow orders, punctuated in some cases by troops assaulting their officers by "fragging" them with grenades. Although changes in American society and the difficult circumstances of the war in Vietnam complicated the Army's situation, the collapse of discipline was, to a significant extent, a failure of military leadership.⁶

Drug abuse, restricted to limited marijuana use in the early years of the American commitment, expanded greatly after 1968. By 1971, the Army had an epidemic of heroin abuse on its hands in Vietnam. A survey of Army personnel in Vietnam undertaken by the Army-funded Human Resources Research Organization in 1971 indicated that half had experimented with marijuana and nearly a third had tried heroin. Even more worrisome was the revelation that 13.8 percent used marijuana daily and 9.2 percent used heroin daily. Nor were the problems limited to Vietnam, as drug use was rife in units in Germany, the United States, and Korea as well.⁷

⁵ See Seymour M. Hersh, "The Decline and Near Fall of the U.S. Army," *Saturday Review* 55 no.47 (18 November 1972): 58-65 for a well-developed example of this school of thought.

⁶ Haynes Johnson and George C. Wilson wrote a revealing eight-part series entitled "Army in Anguish," [*Washington Post*, September 12-20, 1971] which detailed the Army's problems with racial tension, drugs, crime, poor leadership, and dissent within the ranks; the last three parts of the series focus on the service's prospects for rebuilding. Numerous secondary works which appeared during the Seventies addressed the Army's disciplinary problems in this time period. Most are somewhat polemical, but nonetheless informative. George Walton's *The Tarnished Shield*, Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), and E.L. King's *The Death of the Army* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972) are among those critical of the Army. Hauser's *America's Army In Crisis* attempted to present the point of view of a would-be constructive critic within the Army.

⁷ Allan H. Fisher, "Preliminary Findings from the 1971 DoD Survey of Drug Use," Alexandria, Va. (HUMRRO Division no. 7--Social Science, March 1972), 23, 25, reproduced in U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Drug Abuse in the Military. *Drug Abuse in*

Racial tension was both a significant indicator of indiscipline and a contributing factor to other disciplinary problems in the later stages of the American commitment in Vietnam. The civil rights movement had opened up long-ignored racial issues and raised African-Americans' consciousness of their racial identity and oppression. As racial tensions rose, the proportion of blacks in the junior officer ranks actually declined, further complicating the Army's racial problems. A decline in the percentage of black officers from 3.6 percent of the officer corps in 1965 to only 2.6 percent in 1970 indicated a growing disillusionment with the Army among more educated African-Americans. The absence of black officers to serve as role models or peacemakers contributed to the Army's problems when racial problems boiled over in 1970 and 1971.⁸ Aside from a few highly publicized incidents in Vietnam and complaints about the overrepresentation of blacks in combat units and on casualty lists, most racial incidents were the product of boredom and social friction away from the front lines. At the major support bases in Vietnam, in units in Germany and the United States, however, racial intimidation and violence were an ever-present danger.⁹

The drug problem and racial tension contributed to a wave of crime and violence in the Army. Drug users stole from or robbed fellow soldiers. Drug pushers battled to control the barracks trade and sought to intimidate potential whistleblowers. Racial tension erupted into violence, with groups of angry black soldiers rioting or beating isolated white servicemen.¹⁰ By 1971, conditions were bad enough that many soldiers

the Military: Hearing Before the Senate Committee on Drug Abuse in the Military, 92nd Congress, 2nd session, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), following p. 387.

⁸ Hauser, *America's Army in Crisis*, 77-78.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 77-79; See "Spec," "Trouble In the Sand Pile," *Army Times*, January 14, 1970 for an example of how racial tension developed at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam over the winter of 1969-1970. Haynes Johnson and George C. Wilson, *Army in Anguish* no.2, "GI Crime , Violence Climb Overseas," *Washington Post* (13 September 1971), p. A14, noted that though most reported incidents of racial violence involved blacks as the aggressors, black soldiers believed that whites were more likely to report incidents because they had faith in the system, while black soldiers had to resort to retaliation if they were wronged.

¹⁰ Haynes Johnson and George C. Wilson, "Army in Anguish" series, *Washington Post*, 12-20 September 1971 *passim*. See in particular part two,. "GI Crime , Violence Climb Overseas," 13 September 1971, p. A1.

feared for their safety. A judge advocate serving in Germany declared that, "Crimes of violence, such as robbery, are at an all-time high and climbing. I'd just hate to live in the barracks." An enlisted man who did live in the barracks put it more bluntly: "The only way I'd walk around here at night is if I'm carrying this [bayonet] with me."¹¹

Fragging, a term coined in Vietnam to describe the unprecedented number of incidents of soldiers attacking their officers and noncommissioned officers using fragmentation grenades, became a major concern to Army leaders. During 1969, there were 126 fragging incidents reported, 271 in 1970, and 238 in the first seven months of 1971. During the same period, fragging produced eighty-two fatalities and 651 injuries.¹² In 1971, many unit commanders began taking the drastic step of securing weapons and ammunition from all their men except those on sentry duty.¹³

Desertion and absence without leave were further indicators of the collapse of discipline in the Army. By 1971, the desertion rate stood at 73.4 per thousand men; as recently as 1968 the figure had been only 29.1 per thousand. The previous record high desertion rate in modern times, set in 1944 at the height of the Second World War with all the discipline problems attending the massive expansion of the Army and heavy

¹¹ Ibid. p.A1. Johnson and Wilson, *Army in Anguish*, no.1, "The U.S. Army: A Battle for Survival," *Washington Post*, 12 September 1971, p. A1.

¹² Statistics cited by Gen. Bruce Palmer in U. S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives*, 92nd Congress, 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 583. Hauser, *America's Army in Crisis*, 101-102; Gabriel and Savage, *Crisis in Command*, 44. For more information on fragging, see Charles Moskos, "The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam," *Journal of Social Issues* 31, no.4 (1975): 25-37 and U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Nomination of John D. Lavelle, General Creighton Abrams, et al. Hearing Before the Committee On Armed Services*, 92nd Congress, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 136-137. Fragging usually stemmed from three motives: drug users attempting revenge upon a commander who cracked down on drug use; racially motivated incidents, usually initiated by blacks against superiors perceived to be racist; and attacks in combat units on officers or noncoms who were thought to be too aggressive in committing their men to danger. While fragging has come to be defined more or less exclusively as attacks on officers with fragmentation grenades with intent to kill, fragging had a somewhat more expansive definition in Vietnam. The name did come from the increasingly common practice of attempted murder using fragmentation grenades, but some "fraggings" in Vietnam were acts of intimidation--often progressing from smoke grenades to tear gas and then finally to fragmentation grenades if the victim failed to get the hint (Gabriel and Savage, *Crisis in Command*, 44).

¹³ Peter Jay and Peter Osnos, *Army in Anguish* no.5, "Bored GIs Turn to 'Fragging,' Heroin," *Washington Post* 16 September 1971, p. A1.

combat, had peaked at 63.0 per thousand. In 1970 the Army reported over 76,000 deserters dropped from the rolls for being absent from their units for more than thirty days, nearly double the number it had in 1968 with a far larger force in Vietnam. While large numbers of men were deserting, many others went absent without leave for weeks at a time but returned before the thirty-day cutoff to be listed as a deserter.¹⁴ Making matters worse, many officers preferred to list suspected deserters or AWOL's as being on leave rather than admit that the discipline in their units was imperiled.¹⁵

Combat refusal was a particularly stark example of the confrontation between officers and enlisted men. In addition to a few highly publicized incidents where whole units refused to follow direct orders to go into combat, combat refusals by individual soldiers expanded from 68 spread among the seven divisions in Vietnam in 1968 to 35 in the First Cavalry Division alone by 1971. It is possible that some incidents of combat refusal went unreported, but the evidence available is enough to show the progressive growth of a willingness among enlisted men to openly flout their leaders' authority in combat situations.¹⁶

The Army and American Society:

The Army's problems were numerous as the war wound down in 1970 and 1971, but the problems were not entirely of the Army's own creation. A number of the service's difficulties stemmed from sources largely beyond the Army's control. The changing social makeup of American society combined with the political restrictions of fighting a limited war to produce significant negative effects on the Army's ability to build and maintain a cohesive fighting force.

¹⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Nomination of Robert F. Froehlke: Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, first session, June 28, 1971*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 9; Gabriel and Savage, *Crisis in Command*, 42-43, 181-182; USAWC, *Study on Military Professionalism*, B-29.

¹⁵ Gen. Hamilton H. Howze (USA ret.) "Military Discipline and National Security," *Army* 21, no.1 (January 1971), 11.

¹⁶ U. S. Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Robert R. Froehlke*, 9-11.

The Army, as senior officers were fond of pointing out, was in many ways a reflection of American society, sharing its problems as well as its strengths. As the most manpower-dependent of the armed services, the Army had to work with a broad segment of American youth, and societal trends among American youth in the late Sixties and early Seventies made them increasingly challenging material for the Army. To an extent, the facts of changing American society in the Sixties bore out officers' frequent assertion that the Army's problems were problems that its recruits brought with them from civilian society. In racial relations, the Army had greater power than civilian society to forcibly integrate, but it could not change recruits' entrenched racial attitudes. To an extent, the Army's drug problems also reflected societal trends. As a result of rising drug use among young Americans, many recruits came to the Army as current or former drug users.¹⁷

The broad trend among young people toward increasing resistance to authority posed a major difficulty for the fundamentally authoritarian military. Army leaders recognized that increasingly individualistic recruits would require different treatment and made an effort to appease the increasingly independent-minded soldier, particularly as the elimination of the draft began to appear increasingly likely. The "Volunteer Army" program (VOLAR), established in 1970 in preparation for the expected elimination of the draft, represented the most ambitious (and most publicized) effort to improve living and working conditions for soldiers. In addition, Army officers emphasized the need for greater communication and empathy with their charges. Despite the Army's attempts at accommodation, however, the necessity of maintaining military discipline and deep-seated opposition to the Vietnam War among youth virtually ensured that friction would continue to exist.¹⁸

¹⁷See Hauser, *America's Army in Crisis*, 73-77, 124-129 for an insightful discussion of the complexities of the relationship between Army and society with regard to racial and drug issues.

¹⁸Brigadier General Willard Latham, "The Modern Volunteer Army Program: The Benning Experiment, 1970-1972," (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1974), pp. v, 7-8.

The Johnson administration's decision to keep the Vietnam War strictly a limited war, a policy also adhered to by the Nixon administration, exacerbated the Army's problems both in Vietnam and at home. Since the reserves were not to be called up the Army had to rely on its Regular Army cadre, filled to combat strength primarily by draftees. Denying the Army the services of the trained and technically-skilled reservists that its war plans had counted on created problems immediately, which were compounded by overstraining the draft system to compensate for the resulting manpower demand. The high draft calls that resulted contributed to increasing opposition to Selective Service. Further complicating matters, as a concession to political pressure and individual morale, draftees only spent a one-year tour in Vietnam out of their two years of obligated service. The end result was that most units in Vietnam were composed of draftees who shuffled rapidly in and out of units, greatly complicating the task of leaders. At the same time, the lack of progress in the war required ever more manpower, leading to higher draft calls and more civilian opposition to the Army.¹⁹

As the war dragged on, the Army had to contend with declining public prestige in addition to its other problems. The rising tide of civilian opposition to the Vietnam War undermined the Army's efforts to attract and retain talented people in both the officer corps and the enlisted ranks. The pressure of anti-war sentiment was particularly difficult for the Army to counter since political considerations had led civilian officials to avoid attempting a full mobilization of the national will in the war effort.. Politically-motivated decisions such as avoiding a formal declaration of war and fighting the war without calling up the Reserves limited the Army's ability to counter its critics: since the government had sought to keep the war on the periphery of the national consciousness, it was difficult for the Army to mobilize public support.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid., 8-10; Gabriel and Savage, *Crisis in Command*, 41.

²⁰ Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 9-10,17-19.

The restrictions imposed on the Army by cautious civilian leaders prevented the Army from enlisting men "for the duration" or pursuing a strategy which would bring the war to an early conclusion, while at the same time the continuing need for men necessitated further draft calls that further alienated reluctant potential draftees and their sympathizers. By July 1973, the unpopularity of the draft eventually led to its phase-out and elimination; thereafter, the Army would have to rely exclusively on voluntary recruitment under the "All Volunteer Force" concept (AVF). Given the public attitude toward the Army in the late stages of the Vietnam conflict, the approaching end of the draft seemed a worrisome prospect to Army leaders.²¹ As the unsatisfying limited war dragged on, many civilians came to see the Army's actions in the worst possible light, expanding from opposition to the war to outright anti-military beliefs. While the antiwar movement never gained majority support, anti-military activism further complicated the Army's position in a traditionally non-military society.²²

Elusive Professionalism:

Dealing with a divided nation while it fought a frustrating, protracted war constituted a major test of the professionalism of the officers of the Army. Speaking before a meeting of the Association of the U.S. Army in the fall of 1969, recently appointed Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland forcefully enunciated the crucial role professionalism would have to play in the Army's recovery from the problems it faced in Vietnam. Westmoreland declared:

With our troubled society questioning the role of the Army more than ever before, each soldier in a position of leadership is on trial... both his character and his integrity are being tested. To meet the test, he must stand on his principles... his personal and professional code of ethics, his dedication, his leadership. These are the principles that resolve the crucial... these determine the

²¹ Gabriel and Savage, *Crisis in Command*, 45-50; While numerous military apologists have blamed the government for micromanagement of military affairs, noted pro-military author Harry Summers perceptively noted that senior generals could have resigned to protest civilian interference but declined to do so; thus, they must share responsibility for the flawed strategy that the nation employed (*On Strategy II*, 52-54).

²² Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 329-332, 417-418. Anderson's work provides an excellent overview of the growth of an activist spirit in America during the Sixties.

worth of a man's life. These are the hallmarks of the professional soldier in his finest tradition.²³

The bedrock of military professionalism in the United States Army had always been devotion to the service's traditional ethical code—"Duty-Honor-Country." Duty-Honor-Country, inscribed on the battlements of West Point and the motto of the officer corps for most of its two centuries, continued to serve as the American officer's guiding principle. The code symbolized the officer corps' devotion to the military profession and to the nation, pledging obedience and faithful service. Unfortunately, however, events in Vietnam made it increasingly clear that the ideal did not provide sufficient guidance to officers in the complicated politico-military environment of the late Twentieth century.²⁴

The modern understanding of military professionalism had its roots in a debate among civilian academics during the 1950s and 1960s.²⁵ The consensus was that the professional military officer was ultimately an expert in the "management of violence," skilled in organizing people and material in order to defeat opposing forces in combat. The essential complement of this technical skill in war was an ethic of service, however, the crucial element that distinguished the professional from the expert. Far from being a wanton killer, the military professional was the devoted servant of the civilian-controlled state; the officer developed and employed his terrible skills only at the direction of

²³William Westmoreland, speech at the United States Army Annual Luncheon, Association of the United States Army--Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington D.C., 14 October 1969, Westmoreland Personal Papers Kept by the Center of Military History, 1962-1972 (Box 36, folder 492, RG 319), National Archives II, College Park, Md..

²⁴ Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism*, p. iii., B-3.

²⁵ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957) and Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, (New York: The Free Press, 1960) were the two most important works in the development of the theory of military professionalism. The two authors agreed on the basic elements of military professionalism, but their conclusions were quite different. Huntington felt that society had to become more conservative in order to maintain stable civil-military relations, while Janowitz accepted the changing nature of society and declared that the military would have to accept the situation.

civilian authority in the service of the state.²⁶ In an ideal situation, the military would surrender all authority over political and diplomatic matters to the civilian government in return for recognition of the professional's preeminence in purely military matters. While the increasingly complicated geopolitical situation of the late Twentieth century made such a complete separation of civil and military spheres impossible, the basic notion of military subordination to civilian authority was central to the professional ethics of the United States Army. Although civilian control was not directly endangered during the Vietnam period, the turmoil within the Army threatened the ethical basis of the profession of arms.²⁷

The Importance of Integrity:

Ethical integrity was the crucial prerequisite for military professionalism for several reasons. Integrity was vital to preserving the element of trust required in combat. General Walter "Dutch" Kerwin, the Army's top personnel officer during Westmoreland's tenure as chief of staff explained that, "the heart and core of the military is integrity. To be able to tell somebody something, and have it understood in your mind and his mind that he will do it, or the answer that he will give back will be an answer that is honest and filled with integrity; that is the heart of the military system and the heart of being in combat." With lives hanging in the balance in combat, the Army

²⁶Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 11-18. Janowitz suggested that the increasing difficulty of separating civilian and military affairs required substantial changes in the military's basic values--in a nuclear era, the military would have to abandon the goal of decisive victory in exchange for creating stable international relations--see Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 439-440.

²⁷ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 70-72, 82-83. While Huntington's theory remained very influential, S.E. Finer complicated matters in *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics--second, enlarged edition, revised and updated*, Boulder, Colorado (Westview Press, 1988) [orig. pub. Pall Mall Press, 1962], which took aim at Huntington's notion of professionalism as the centerpiece of effective civilian control. Finer argued that Huntington's theory of civilian control through military professionalization depended on a highly constrained definition of professionalism. Professionalism alone is not enough to ensure civil control: rather, Finer contended that, "if the armed forces are not to intervene [in politics], they must believe in an *explicit* principle--the principle of civil supremacy," (pp.21-22). Finer's criticism impacts more on the derivation of Huntington's ideas and their proscriptive power than for the identification with Huntington's ideas felt by the U.S. military, which assuredly did believe in the principle of civil supremacy.

could not afford to have officers who would place their personal careers or self-interest ahead of truthfulness and disciplined obedience.²⁸

While officers tended to emphasize the importance of professional ethics to performance in combat, the Army understood that ethical behavior was absolutely critical to preserving the Army's proper role as an apolitical servant of the civilian government. What little guidance officers received on ethical matters beyond repeated reference to "Duty-Honor-Country" came primarily through a publication of the Armed Services Information Service entitled *The Armed Forces Officer*. First published in 1950 at the urging of former Chief of Staff George C. Marshall and revised several times over the years, this small book contained a wealth of information on the philosophy and practice of military leadership. In addition to offering wisdom on subjects as diverse as motivating one's troops, professional speaking and writing, and the characteristics of Americans in combat, *The Armed Forces Officer* also contained several chapters dealing with military ethics. The first chapter, entitled, "The Meaning of Your Commission" reminded the officer that:

The traditional esteem of the average citizen for the military officer is a major ingredient, indeed a prerequisite of the national security.... That is why there is such extreme emphasis on the imperative of personal honor in the military officer: not only the future of our arms but the well-being of our people depend upon a constant reaffirmation and strengthening of public faith in the virtue and trustworthiness of the officer body."

The text made clear that if the public lost faith in the integrity of the officer corps, the nation might begin to see the maintenance and use of the armed forces as increasingly risky, with results that could ultimately be disastrous for the nation as well as the services.²⁹

Failure of Leadership

²⁸ General Walter T. Kerwin, interviewed by Col. D.A. Doehle, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Senior Officer Oral History Program, Project 80-2, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (United States Army Military History Institute [USAMHI], 1980), 504.

²⁹ *The Armed Forces Officer* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 1-2. The authors seemed to feel that the armed forces of the United States would never countenance a *coup d'état*, but that fear of one might lead the nation to weaken its defense to a dangerously low level.

Unfortunately, during the later Vietnam years an increasing amount of evidence suggested that the Army officer corps ability to lead was seriously flawed. While the difficulties of dealing with an increasingly liberal civilian society and a challenging limited war cannot be discounted in tracing the development of the Army's problems in the Vietnam era, officers increasingly perceived a failure of Army leadership as a central contributing factor to the service's discipline problems. As General Michael Davison, recently returned from Vietnam, told a reporter in 1971, "I think the toughest problem we have, and this is almost too frank to say, is the leadership problem within the Army. Whether it be drugs or whether it be race or whether it be combat readiness, fundamentally the task is getting your subordinates to work wholeheartedly toward the mission."³⁰ In testimony before a Senate committee in 1971, General Creighton Abrams, then the commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam and later Westmoreland's successor as Chief of Staff of the Army, echoed Davison's assessment of the leadership problem. The committee's report recorded Abrams' explanation that maintaining proper discipline in the challenging environment of the Vietnam era was a task that required good leaders, yet, "he said frankly that such leaders are not easy to come by and that the military presently doesn't have them in sufficient numbers at all levels."³¹

Officers of all ranks shared perceptions of leadership shortcomings, but junior and senior officers disagreed as to who was most at fault. Senior officers tended to blame the Army's problems on the shortcomings of young company grade officers. Some senior officers claimed that young lieutenants and captains were prone to identify overmuch with their enlisted men, compromising their ability to enforce disciplinary standards. Major General Arthur H. Sweeney, a logistics officer in Vietnam, spoke for many fellow generals in his assessment of the leadership problem: "The majority of our young officers today are solely interested in serving their time and getting out as quickly

³⁰ "Gen. Davison: 'Toughest Period... Ever,'" *Washington Post*, 12 September 1971, p. A16.

³¹ "Staff Report on Drug Use in the Military: Report of the Subcommittee on Drug Abuse of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, First Session" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 4.

as possible. It is unfortunate but they do not accept the challenge of leadership.... All too often [sic], the young Lieutenant identifies himself with the troops and is more sympathetic toward them than he is to the needs of the service."³²

For their part, junior officers were conscious of problems within their own ranks, but perceived serious flaws in the example set by their superiors. Moreover, the fact remained that the senior officers of the 1980s would be drawn from the junior officers of the 1970s. It was imperative for the Army to explore junior officers' complaints if it was to retain the talented individuals it would need in the years ahead. The frustration and dismay of the junior officer corps at the climate within the Army in the early Seventies was the end product of the service's problems and in the long run its greatest concern.

The divergence of opinion on the source of the Army's leadership problems was symbolic of a general breakdown of communication between junior and senior officers which had deep negative effects on the officer corps. Junior officers came to feel that their superiors had little interest in their opinions or their welfare. Senior officers demanded loyalty from their subordinates to the point of subservience but paid them little respect in return. Consumed with impressing their own superiors in order to move on up the promotion ladder, officers focused on their own careers to the detriment of their subordinates. Frequently superior officers treated their subordinates as tools to be used to assist the superior officer in assembling an impressive six month record of accomplishment during his command tour, then discarded. Colonel David Hackworth, one of the Army's most outspoken critics within the ranks but also the service's most highly decorated active officer and often cited as being on the short list for general, argued that many highly capable "young tigers" who he had spoken with were fed up with senior officers' habit of pulling rank on their subordinates. "The indictment that is

³² Maj. Gen. Arthur H. Sweeney, Senior Officer Debriefing Report, Commanding Officer, U.S. Army Support Command, Da Nang, 27 November 1970-April 1972 (National Archives II, College Park, Md.: RG 472, Records of the U.S. Army Vietnam, Senior Officer Debriefing Reports, Box no.10), p. H-1.

suggested," Hackworth concluded, "is that we in the senior grades have forgotten that these young leaders are people.... I believe that we managers have forgotten the man." Within a year, Hackworth resigned his commission in order to avoid punishment for making public his views of the Army's shortcomings. The message to many frustrated officers was clear: the Army would not respond to constructive criticism so they had a choice between either adapting to the present system or leaving the service.³³

The Army's disciplinary problems and lack of support from senior officers contributed to decreasing retention of junior officers, a phenomenon discouraging in both the short term and the long term. In the short term the shortage of quality junior officers led to the commissioning of men who would not ordinarily have met the Army's standards for officers, with some unfortunate results. William Calley, a junior-college dropout and oft-unemployed wanderer before enlisting in the Army and completing Officer Candidate School, constituted in his central role in the My Lai massacre the most dramatic and tragic case of a man placed beyond his ability.³⁴ In the long term, the situation was perhaps even more disturbing. The retention rate of West Point graduates, who traditionally were most committed to a military career, dropped from percentages in the high nineties in the late Sixties to 72 percent by 1971. Coupled with the fact that participation in the Reserve Officer Training Corps program had dropped substantially, particularly at the elite schools most likely to produce outstanding officers, the declining retention rate of West Pointers threatened to produce a marked decline in the quality of the officer corps if not addressed.³⁵

The Army's ultimate problem in the late Vietnam era was that the service faced new leadership challenges while it was simultaneously losing many potentially strong young officers. The breakdown of discipline reflected in the pattern of drug use, racial incidents, AWOL, fragging, and combat refusal was largely the result of unsatisfactory

³³ Col. David H. Hackworth, "Bluster and Insensitivity Cost Army Good Men," *Army* 20, no.3 (March 1970): 56.

³⁴ Gabriel and Savage, *Crisis in Command*, 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

leadership at the small unit level. Unfortunately, the problem was self-reinforcing. The breakdown of discipline was the product of poor leadership, but by complicating the task of leaders the Army's new problems contributed to the decline in the quality of leadership by inducing many frustrated officers to leave the service. While the Army could not combat the societal influences that contributed to its disciplinary problems, the lack of communication and understanding between officers was the result of a breakdown of the professionalism of the Army officer corps. The Army leadership failed to respond to the growing evidence of disarray in the officer corps until the My Lai Massacre startled it into action.

My Lai:

The appearance in April of 1969 of Ron Ridenhour's allegations of the Army's misdeeds at My Lai in March of the previous year shook the confidence of both Army leaders and civilians in the state of professional ethics in the officer corps at a time when the Army was already under fire for its lack of progress in the war. While Westmoreland had exhibited concern for the status of the Army and its future prospects from early on in his term as Chief of Staff, My Lai focused his attention on the integrity of the officer corps. In the wake of the My Lai Massacre and the ensuing cover-up, however, ethics became a dominating issue. Westmoreland became increasingly concerned about the integrity and honor of the Army's officers.³⁶

After preliminary investigations by Army Criminal Investigation personnel and the Army Inspector General's office made clear that Ridenhour's allegations were founded, Westmoreland took steps to address the disturbing situation.³⁷ In November of 1969, he addressed a letter "To the officers of the Army" in an effort to underscore

³⁶ Gen. William C. Westmoreland, "Gen. William C. Westmoreland, USA, ret.: U.S. Army Military History Institute Senior Officer Oral History Project, Project 1982-F, Vol. I and II," interviewed by Lt. Col. Martin L. Ganderson, (U.S. Army Military History Institute, 1982), 236-237, 246 [cited subsequently as "Westmoreland SOOHP"]. The text of Ridenhour's letter appears in full in *The Peers Inquiry*, 1.7-1.11.

³⁷ *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1970*, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1972), 27 [cited hereafter as *DAHSUM 1970*].

the importance of ethical behavior for military professionals. Without ever referring to My Lai or any other specific incident, Westmoreland emphatically declared, "I want to make it clear beyond any question that absolute integrity of an officer's word, deed, and signature is a matter that permits no compromise." While he acknowledged that the changes in American society and in the military's mission and composition made the officer's task more difficult, Westmoreland insisted that officers' professional responsibility obliged them to overcome these challenges through increased ethical awareness. He concluded that "... there is only one sure path to honor--unflinching honesty and sincerity in word and deed. I charge every officer to shoulder his responsibility, as I expect every officer to earn our Nation's trust."³⁸

The Peers Report

On November 26, 1969, following on the heels of his forceful statement of the ethical demands of professionalism, Westmoreland ordered a special investigation into the My Lai incident in order to gain a greater understanding of why the tragedy had occurred. He appointed Lt. Gen. William Peers, a respected veteran with a reputation for honesty and evenhandedness as well as recent combat command experience in Vietnam, to investigate the events at My Lai. After initiating the investigation by traveling to Vietnam to survey the scene and make initial contacts in late December and early January of 1969, the Peers Inquiry set up shop in Washington, D.C. Peers, assisted by two distinguished civilian lawyers and a large staff of investigators and support personnel, spent the next several months interviewing over four hundred officers and enlisted men in connection with the incident. On 14 March of 1970, the Peers Commission transmitted its report and recommendations to Westmoreland on 14 March of 1970--barely in time to beat the two-year statute of limitations for war crimes prosecutions.³⁹

³⁸ Undated letter from Gen. William C. Westmoreland, "To the Officers of the Army," reproduced in William C. Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, 1 July 1968 to 30 June 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1977), 178.

³⁹*The Peers Inquiry*, pp. i, 1-1.

Following the investigation the details of the massacre appeared relatively straightforward. On 16 March 1968, a fairly routine tactical operation undertaken by Task Force Barker, a battalion-sized temporary unit of the 11th Brigade of the Americal Division, turned into a brutal atrocity as American troops indiscriminately and methodically killed hundreds of non-combatants. The investigation substantiated that while under the supervision of their officers, several squad and platoon-sized elements of Task Force Barker had killed at least 175 and perhaps more than 400 unarmed individuals, including women and children. The troops' behavior could be traced to the failure of the officers in command to give their troops clear orders and adequate explanation of the situation they were entering; moreover, officers of Task Force Barker had displayed an air of indifference to Vietnamese lives and property which encouraged their men to treat all Vietnamese encountered on the operation as hostile.⁴⁰

The atrocity itself was only part of the Army's failure at My Lai, however, as the Peers Report revealed in its analysis of the failure of the chain of command to investigate or report the incident. Officers of Task Force Barker and their superiors in the 11th Brigade and Americal Division command had substantial information about the massacre shortly after it took place but chose to dismiss it rather than properly investigating the situation. Hovering overhead in his helicopter, Americal Division commander Major General Samuel Koster should have had *some* reaction to reports that Task Force Barker had killed 128 Viet Cong at the cost of one killed and two wounded; as Peers noted, had this actually been the case, it would have constituted the 11th Brigade's greatest combat success up to that date. Yet Koster chose not to investigate the unusual situation even after he received word of twenty or so civilians accidentally killed, supposedly by artillery and helicopter gunships. Despite the unusually high body count and the report of civilian deaths, which Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) headquarters required to be investigated and reported to

⁴⁰ Ibid. pp. 1-7, 2.1-2.4.

Saigon, Koster and his subordinates accepted the day's events uncritically and did not report any unusual details up the chain of command. Subsequently, officers throughout the Americal Division chain of command sought to conceal information regarding the incident from their superiors and from MACV and the Vietnamese government.⁴¹

The Peers Report disturbed Westmoreland because it revealed a failure of leadership from top to bottom--failure in professional competence, in communication, and most of all in simple honesty and integrity. Certainly the killings themselves were a terrible crime, but the problem ran deeper than that. William Calley, the second lieutenant responsible for many of the killings and subsequently the only man convicted by a court martial in connection with My Lai, was an inexperienced, undereducated young man of limited talents, operating beyond his depth; the system had failed by placing such a man in command of troops in combat. The most shameful aspect of My Lai for the officer corps, however, was the extent to which the behavior of the officers above Calley in the chain of command behaved in contributing the massacre and the following cover-up. Captain Ernest Medina of C Company, the unit that committed most of the killings, had dominated and denigrated the unit's young and inexperienced platoon leaders to the point where their authority over the men under their command was negligible; coupled with his lack of respect for Vietnamese life, his interference with the chain of command produced tragic results. Eleventh Brigade commander Colonel Oran Henderson and Brigadier General George Young, Americal Division executive officer, were required by MACV policy to investigate any incidents of civilian casualties that might occur and report their findings. After My Lai, despite mounting evidence of an atrocity, they made no legitimate effort to do so. General Koster, a highly respected officer who was serving as Superintendent of West Point at the time of the investigation, had failed to exercise proper supervision over his subordinates and had allowed the incident to be covered up despite his awareness of facts which merited immediate and

⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 8.9-8.13, 12.1-12.4.

thorough investigation. From top to bottom, the events at Son My and the cover-up that followed tarred the Americal Division leadership and, by extension, the Army officer corps at large with a widespread and disastrous failure to live up to the ethical standards of military professionalism.⁴²

While the information within the text of the investigation's official report gave an alarming impression of the state of leadership within the Americal Division, a confidential memo from General Peers to Westmoreland accompanying the official report proved even more disturbing by making clear Peers' conviction that the problems in the Americal Division extended throughout the Army. The hundreds of interviews Peers had conducted in the course of his investigation had led him to believe that My Lai was merely a symptom of a deep-seated sickness in the moral and ethical fiber of the Army officer corps. This perception motivated Peers to include a list of recommendations entitled "Leadership Requirements in a Counterinsurgency Environment" which the experience of the investigation led him to believe were much-neglected. Peers focused on the moral challenges of command, emphasizing the necessity of honesty, responsibility, and communication, all of which he found wanting in the course of his investigation. Peers maintained that the environment of the Vietnam war required officers who were able to make hard choices without regard for their own careers: "On those rare occasions when people around him engage in activities clearly wrong and immoral, he is required by virtue of his being an officer to take whatever remedial action is required, regardless of the personal consequences."⁴³ He concluded that, "the combat commander at any level who fails to keep these considerations uppermost in his mind and in the minds of the men who serve under him, invites disaster. In my view, the validity of these considerations and their importance to us, as

⁴² Ibid. pp. 12.3-12.4.

⁴³ Gen. William R. Peers to CSA William Westmoreland, 18 March 1970, "Leadership Requirements in a Counterinsurgency Environment," Westmoreland Personal Papers Kept by the Center of Military History 1962-1972 (Box no.24, Folder 446, RG 319), National Archives II, College Park, Md. Cincinnatus, *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam Era* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1981) reproduces the memo in full on pp. 195-198.

soldiers, are borne out in a review of the events of Son My."⁴⁴ Major General Franklin Davis recalled that, "the memo... shook Westy to the core."⁴⁵ The combination of Peers' report on My Lai and the memo on the climate in the officer corps which contributed to the tragedy produced a feeling of deep concern in Westmoreland's office that led the Chief of Staff to push the Army officer corps to mount an exhaustive self-examination of its professionalism and ethics.

Flawed Professionalism

The grim picture painted by Peers in his memo led Westmoreland to undertake a broader and more systematic evaluation of the state of professionalism in the officer corps. The obvious conclusion was that the officer corps was flawed; the question remained as to what was wrong and how to fix it. Seeking answers to these questions, Westmoreland commissioned the Army War College to produce a report on the state of professionalism in the Army officer corps on April 18, 1970. The result was a groundbreaking document entitled *Study on Military Professionalism*, swiftly researched and assembled by the War College and transmitted to the Chief of Staff on 30 June 1970. The study's findings proved even more discouraging than the Peers Report--the *Study on Military Professionalism* so alarmed Westmoreland and other senior generals when they were briefed on its contents that they restricted its distribution to general officers despite the original intention of pushing the development of a broad dialogue on professionalism within the officer corps as a whole.⁴⁶

The *Study on Military Professionalism* confronted senior officers with hard evidence of a widespread perception of professional failure within the officer corps. The study's principal authors, Lieutenant Colonels Walter Ulmer and Dandridge "Mike"

⁴⁴ Peers to Westmoreland, 18 March 1970, "Leadership Requirements. . . ."

⁴⁵ Stuart H. Loory, *Defeated: Inside America's Military Machine* (New York: Random House, 1973), 27-28.

⁴⁶ James Kitfield, in *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995) 107-113, presents a lively account, based on interviews with the study's principal authors, of the briefing in which Westmoreland and other senior generals were informed of the study's findings.

Malone, surveyed a sample of 450 officer students--mostly lieutenant colonels, majors, and captains--at six major service schools, including the War College and the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. As a result, the research sample was an elite rather than a representative group--many of the best officers in the Army. The high achievement level of the officers in the sample made their perceptions of the Army all the more telling for the service's senior leaders, however. Questionnaires and subsequent group discussions conducted by War College teams uncovered a perception among most officers questioned that the Army was failing to live up to its professional and ethical ideals, and that its failure to do so was hindering its military performance. Though "Duty-Honor-Country" remained the professional ideal of the officer corps, the authors reported that, "Officers of all grades perceive a significant difference between the ideal values and the actual or operative values of the Officer Corps."⁴⁷

Among the revelations in the *Study on Military Professionalism* which were most unsettling to senior generals was its conclusion that the Army's own internal policies, rather than external influences, were largely responsible for its problems. Contrary to the opinion popular among many senior officers, the study maintained that, "There is no direct evidence that external fiscal, political, sociological, or managerial influences are the primary causative factors of this less than optimum climate. Neither does the public reaction to the Vietnam war, the rapid expansion of the Army, or the current anti-military syndrome stand out as a significant reason for deviations from the level of professional behavior the Army acknowledges as its attainable ideal."⁴⁸ While this pronouncement unduly minimized the influence of outside factors, the study effectively laid out the startling revelation that the Army's internal culture was a central cause of its problems.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ USAWC, *Study on Military Professionalism*, iii-iv.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, v.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

The Army's perfectionist world-view was a dangerous one from the standpoint of officer professionalism. The War College study noted that Duty-Honor-Country remained the Army's ideal, but it was apparent that many officers mouthed the words while practicing a different set of ethics. "Careerism," or devotion to one's own personal advancement even at the expense of the Army's collective mission, had overcome the ethical standards of the military profession. The prevailing climate in 1970 was one in which "cover your ass" and "me, my ass, and my career" were better summations of the typical officer's behavior than "Duty-Honor-Country." The rise of careerism was intermeshed in cause and effect relationships with a complex web of interdependent factors, but the Army's officer personnel system was central.⁵⁰

The Army went into Vietnam with an officer system still shaped by the model of the Second World War. The system was designed to produce "generalist" officers who had experience in a variety of different positions; the assumption, borne out in the Second World War, was that regular Army officers would serve as the cadre for a much larger mobilized Army. In the event of mobilization, regulars would be rapidly promoted to higher ranks in order to oversee the integration of citizen-soldiers into the military machine. To fulfill this role, the professionals would need to be adaptable. Although the Army never again mobilized to the degree it had during World War II, the Army's preparations for the possibility of all-out war with the Soviet Union perpetuated the mobilization-oriented generalist system.

The generalist model of officer development demanded that every officer must be prepared to serve in combat and staff positions, in addition to any technical specialty he might have. In practice, the system required officers to move from one assignment to another in rapid succession. As then-Lieutenant Colonel Zeb Bradford, who eventually rose to general, told author Stuart Loory, "If you want to get ahead in the Army, there are certain stations of the cross you must attain. . . ." The "stations of the cross"

⁵⁰ Ibid., 21-24.

Bradford referred to included company command, civilian graduate education, combat experience, Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, battalion command, and Department of the Army staff work or another high Pentagon position. The most successful officers would ultimately be selected for attendance at the Army War College, a virtual necessity for promotion to general officer. The career management system demanded that the officer who wanted to be successful enter a position, learn as much as he could in a short amount of time, then quickly move on to a new billet, a phenomenon that became known as "ticket-punching." At its best, the system produced generalist officers with a broad range of skills, but the War College study noted that in Vietnam it often produced "an ambitious transitory commander--marginally skilled in the complexities of his duties. . . ."51 While a system that promoted adaptability at the expense of specialization may have made sense in the mass mobilization of the Second World War, the excesses of ticket-punching in Vietnam led Westmoreland to observe, "I felt that we were developing too many 'jacks-of-all-trades' and too many 'masters of none.'" Rapid rotation and lack of specialization hindered the development of professional knowledge as well as contributing to an environment of unhealthy competition.⁵²

Combat command was a critical ticket to punch for advancement in the field-grade level in the generalist system, a requirement which had profound consequences for Army policy in Vietnam. The Army relied upon promotion as the engine to motivate officers--with promotion tied into combat command the Army felt compelled to expose as many men to command as possible. The importance placed on putting a large number of officers in combat command led to the adoption of six-month command tours in Vietnam. Officers would fulfill their year tours in Vietnam by serving for six months in command and then spending six months in staff positions. The result was that units already wracked by continual enlisted personnel turnover also underwent

⁵¹ Stuart H. Loory, *Defeated*, 47-49; AWC, Study on Military Professionalism, iv.

⁵² Westmoreland SOOHP, 248-249.

constant changes in command, further hindering unit bonding. At the same time, officers barely had time to learn the basics of handling a unit and thus often failed to obtain a high level of technical competence. The administrative demands of managing the hundreds of men who comprised a battalion were substantial enough, but the added necessity of converting tactical dictums learned from textbooks and lectures to the realities of combat with lives at stake was more challenging still. While rapid officer turnover provided the Army with a large body of men who had some exposure to combat command, the questionable value of this limited experience must be weighed against the problems the system created in unit morale and professional knowledge. As General Bruce Clarke conceded in 1971, "We decided everybody would have a chance to command; he would have six months. We have found out that has been wrong, that not everybody is qualified to command, and certainly not for six months."⁵³

In addition to complicating the task of instilling unit cohesion and training officers, rapid officer turnover could pressure officers to handle their units unprofessionally. Merely getting a command was the object of intense competition. The vast majority of the 3,300 or so lieutenant colonels in the Army sought battalion command because commanding a battalion was one of the unofficial but clear prerequisites for promotion to general; for these thousands of men, the Army had only 250 commands. The Army tried to alleviate the shortage of commands by instituting the six month command tour, but this created problems of its own. An officer lucky enough to be assigned to battalion command held his future in his hands: the performance of the unit in his six months of command could make or break the remainder of his career. In these circumstances, many officers sought to produce quantifiable short-term *results* rather than working to improve the unit's long-term

⁵³ Anne W. Chapman, "The Army's Training Revolution 1973-1990: An Overview" (Fort Monroe, Va.: Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1991), 3; Congress, House, Committee on Internal Security, *Investigation of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services, Part two, Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security*, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 6994.

performance—after all, any improvements that took more than six months to show results would only aid the unit's next commanding officer, the current leader's competitor for promotion. As Westmoreland observed in a 1972 report, the system had led officers to place, "too much stress on short-term objectives rather than on making a lasting contribution to the job to which he is assigned. The result is a compulsive urge to establish an instant reputation in the unit to which he is assigned in spite of the turmoil that is left in his wake."⁵⁴

Fostering intense competition between officers was intended to raise the standard of performance in the Army, but in practice it resulted in the raising of standards of evaluation to a level that was so unrealistically high that it motivated officers to evade full and honest evaluation of their performance. The phrase "zero defects" had made its way into the Army jargon as a slogan for positive improvement but by the early 1970s, many officers used the term derisively to indicate the Army's unrealistic intolerance for mistakes. The competition for promotion had contributed to a culture which no longer allowed room for learning from one's mistakes—making a mistake came to be seen as a personal failure likely to end an officer's career.

The "zero defects" mentality had profound effects on the officer evaluation system. The Officer Efficiency Report (OER) submitted by an officer's immediate superior—the basis of the system—had lost all relationship with reality. In the heat of competition for choice assignments and promotion, any shortcoming in an officer's record could be used against him. Raters recognized this and gave their subordinates progressively higher ratings. The process spiraled out of control because raters were aware that other raters were also inflating OER's, leading to inflating the ratings still more. Eventually, the system became so corrupted that to rate a young lieutenant or captain in the top 25 percent of the officer corps was liable to end his career. Most raters came to acclaim every officer who served under them as absolutely exceptional,

⁵⁴ CSA Gen. William Westmoreland, "From Army of the 70's: 'A Flawless Performance,'" *Army* 20, no.10 (Army Green Book 1972): 28; Loory, *Defeated*, 60-61.

justifying this falsehood with the knowledge that their colleagues were doubtless inflating their own men's ratings so not doing so for one's own subordinates would only hurt the rater's own men. By encouraging exaggerratedly high ratings, the system became next to worthless for its designed purpose of identifying and promoting the Army's best officers. Moreover, this perfectionism corroded officer professionalism, as it gave the individual rater undue influence over an officer's entire career. Officers often preferred to stifle possibly valid criticisms rather than risk their whole career by disagreeing with a superior. Learning and innovation suffered in a system which discouraged honest internal appraisal and communication.⁵⁵

With only six months in command to prove themselves and an unreachable standard of perfection to achieve, the Army's career management system pressured officers to focus on easily measured achievements rather than achieving a high standard of military performance. Often, commanders focused heavily on improving statistical indicators of performance, such as maintenance of equipment or inspection results, to the detriment of training and combat readiness. One armored battalion commander in Germany related that many Seventh Army armored units attempted to cover up manpower shortages by putting staff officers and support personnel into tanks for combat qualification tests; while more tanks could be qualified, the ultimate effect was to produce a false picture of units' combat readiness. A similar state of affairs prevailed regarding AWOL's. Superior officers, ignorant of the drastic personnel problems in line units, would declare AWOL's unacceptable; junior officers responded by placing AWOL soldiers on leave or otherwise falsifying their reports. As a result, superiors remained happy and ignorant, and junior officers preserved their career prospects at the expense of their unit's combat capability.⁵⁶ The demand for "results" was even more pronounced in combat situations in Vietnam. Some officers handled their units with extreme caution in an effort to avoid casualties that would detract from their records.

⁵⁵ Stuart Loory, *Defeated*, 54.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 43-44, 57; USAWC, *Study on Military Professionalism*, p. B-1.10.

Others pushed their units over-aggressively in order to build up a reputation as a "gung-ho" combat leader, although the rise of fragging may have discouraged such behavior after 1970.⁵⁷

The problems surrounding the "body count" serve as a good example of ethical failure and its implications in combat situations. At the unit level where most officers encountered it, the body count was simply a running tally of the number of enemy soldiers killed by a unit. The body count was intended to provide a measure of progress in a war where traditional military objectives were meaningless. Unfortunately, the body count itself proved to be largely useless. One officer, stating sentiments shared by many others, complained that, "Nobody out there believes the body count. They couldn't possibly believe it. This is probably the most damning thing the Army has used recently...."⁵⁸ The body count's importance to senior officers led subordinates to concentrate on producing enemy corpses and claiming credit for them, even at the risk of their own men. More ominously, the focus on enemy casualties created a casual attitude towards Vietnamese lives that contributed to the My Lai slaughter and countless other less dramatic incidents of civilian casualties.⁵⁹

Perhaps the most damaging result of the emphasis on the body count was the pressure the system created on officers' integrity: in conjunction with the zero defects, "can-do" mentality, the importance placed on body count pressured officers to lie about the count. Since the body count came to be the major indicator of combat success, commanders sometimes falsified the count in order to create the illusion of progress or to justify their own losses. In one instance, one superior officer ordered a major to add forty-five to the tally of enemy dead following a costly firefight in August of 1966--

⁵⁷ Senate Committee on Armed Services, "Nomination of John D. Lavelle, General Creighton Abrams, et. al.", 136-137.

⁵⁸ USAWC, *Study on Military Professionalism*, p. B-1.10.

⁵⁹ See *Peers Inquiry*, 8.10, 8.12. Douglas Kinnaird, *The War Managers* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1977), 74-75. Kinnaird, a chief of military history and a former general himself, conducted an invaluable survey of Army generals who had commanded in Vietnam regarding their attitudes toward various topics related to the war.

heavy American losses in the engagement demanded an impressive collection of enemy dead lest it appear that the unit had been improperly led. When the major resisted, he was relieved. While abuses of the body count destroyed whatever usefulness the body count it may have had as a measure of the progress of the war, the Army's continued focus on short term results reinforced the perception within the officer corps that ethical behavior was detrimental to one's chances of promotion.⁶⁰

The problem with the Army's practice of fostering competition among its officers was that the system failed to emphasize the importance of playing by ethical rules. There was little focus on ethical issues at any point in the education and training of military officers, as repeated intonation of "Duty-Honor-Country" was thought to be sufficient moral grounding for the officer corps. The reality was that the system encouraged, and ultimately came close to demanding, that officers flout the spirit of the rules in order to get ahead. The potentially fatal consequences of poor performance, instead of leading officers to excel, induced them to avoid difficult situations or falsify reports. Moreover, the pressure of the "ticket-punching" rotation system meant that the officer who wanted to advance his career would rarely become truly expert in any position to which he was assigned. The result was disillusionment among junior officers, who recognized the system's inadequacies and respected the service's ideals, but nonetheless felt compelled to play along in order to preserve their careers. The War College study revealed that a large portion of the Army's junior officers perceived the service's ethical shortcomings but felt powerless to do anything about the situation because the system itself produced the problems.

Incompetence and Unethical Behavior

A crucial conclusion in the 1970 study was the establishment of a connection between incompetence and unethical behavior. The study noted that, "Officers of all grades indicated that there was a greater deviation from ideal standards in 'professional

⁶⁰ Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*, 75.

military competence'... than in 'ethical behavior.' In attempting to construct a paradigm that would refine the cause-effect cycle, it became apparent that ethical behavior and technical competence are tightly interlaced." Also, the authors concluded, "inadequate performance in one area [ethics or technical competence] contributes to inadequate performance in the other. This demonstrates the importance of professional ethics to long range mission accomplishment." The study showed that officers who did not have the technical skills--whether that meant knowledge of tactics, of administration, of technologically advanced equipment--would be most likely to find themselves in a position where they were unable to accomplish their missions, at which point the temptation emerged to falsely report greater success than had actually been achieved. From the other perspective, an officer with low ethical standards might see no reason not to do a poor job because he had no compunctions about lying about the results. This linkage between competence and ethics would define the Army's attempts to address the service's professional failures.⁶¹

The *Study on Military Professionalism* included a number of solutions designed to address the ethical problems it perceived. Among those recommended for "prompt action" were: dissemination of the results of the study in order to spark awareness of ethical issues; adding ethics instruction in the service schools; the creation of an "Officer's Creed" that would provide more specific guidance than Duty-Honor-Country; centralizing command assignments for colonels and lieutenant colonels at the Department of the Army (in place of the old system of individual commanders choosing their own subordinates); lengthening command assignments; and eliminating the unstated requirement for promotion that an officer command at battalion and brigade levels. The implementation of these solutions would be mixed, however. While the Army would move to address the problems with its promotion system and command assignments, the Chief of Staff chose not to initiate an Army-wide dialogue on ethics.

⁶¹USAWC, *Study on Military Professionalism*, 19, 22, 30-31.

The *Study* itself was withheld and access to it was restricted to general officers. Nor was formalized ethical instruction instituted in the Army school system. The decision not to publicize the results of the study set a pattern that would frustrate the Army's efforts to address its problems. While Westmoreland and other senior officers seemed sincere in their desire to reform, they were reluctant to admit the systemic nature of the Army's problems publicly. They preferred to institute programs designed to address specific flaws in the system while refraining from aggressively promoting a unified program of ethical revitalization.⁶²

Plans:

Though reluctant to adhere to all of the suggested solutions in the War College study, the Army turned to the task of addressing the leadership problems that the study had revealed. Recognizing the relationship between its institutional practices and the ethical failures recounted in the studies, the Army set out to change the relevant parts of the system. The service attempted to isolate major problems and trace them back to specific causes. The process was well-intentioned and successful to an extent, but it tended to simplify the causes for problems and provide solutions that addressed the identified cause but failed to deal with the larger systemic defect. The Army's education and training system was brought into play as half of the solution, in an effort to deal with the shortcomings of professional knowledge which the 1970 War College study identified as a major cause of unethical behavior. The other half was intervention in the personnel management system in order to change the institutionalized career pattern.

An important element in the Army's program for dealing with the problems outlined in the 1970 study was a 1971 follow-up study, once again assigned to the Army War College by the Chief of Staff. Where the 1970 study had concentrated on a small sample of officers at Army educational institutions, the 1971 study surveyed an Army-wide sample of military leaders, ranging from sergeants to generals. Entitled

⁶² *Ibid.*, vi.

Leadership for the 1970's, the 1971 study was released on October 20, 1971. In some respects its conclusions were quite similar to those of the 1970 project. The Army leadership could take little comfort in the study's confirmation of the existence of "significant defects (lack of communication, inattention to human needs, etc.) in the professional climate corroborating findings of other pertinent recent studies of the military organization."⁶³ The study also discovered "a frequent misperception of how well one's own leadership is meeting the leadership expectations of superior and/or subordinate (individuals consistently perceive their own shortfalls as less than superiors or subordinates perceive them to be)."⁶⁴

Not all of the results of *Leadership for the 1970's* were discouraging, however, as the study pointed to a potential means of addressing the Army's leadership problems. The survey questioned subjects as to what elements of leadership behavior made the strongest positive impression on them and concluded that, "certain items of leader behavior for each grade level have high potential for significant improvements in overall leadership effectiveness in return for a small improvement in the particular behavior." Receiving the highest positive response among these "powerful" leadership elements was "He was technically competent to perform his duties."⁶⁵ This discovery supported the linkage between competence and ethical behavior established in the 1970 study. The new findings led the Army to focus its efforts on improving the technical military skills of officers through its educational and training system, as improving officers' ability to perform the tasks demanded of them would both lessen the pressure to cover up one's inabilities and allow individuals to earn the respect of their subordinates.

Education:

⁶³ United States Army War College, *Leadership for the 1970's: USAWC Study of Leadership for the Professional Soldier--Comprehensive Report* (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 20 October 1971), VIII.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

The Army's decision to turn to the educational system to address its professional problems was a natural choice. The Army had long regarded its officer educational system as one of its greatest strengths. Officers recalled with pride the role of the Army schools in preparing the tiny interwar officer corps for the task of building the giant mass Army that won the Second World War. General Ralph Haines, former Vice Chief of Staff and head of a major inquiry into the state of the Army's school system in 1966, declared that, "the Army schooling system, this system for schooling of Army officers, is just fundamental to the professionalism of the Army.... The further you get away from combat experience in your officer corps, the more you are dependent on the theoretical training that you get in your school system."⁶⁶ With Vietnam behind it, the officer corps was once again facing a period of peace, during which the contributions of the educational system would be more important than ever. Educational standards for officers were raised, the Army's training system was redesigned, and training in war crimes increased, all in attempts to combat the problems perceived in the studies.

A prerequisite to rebuilding the standards of the officer corps was the elimination of incompetents from its ranks, a task the Army began during the manpower drawdown after 1969. Focusing on the connection between incompetence and unethical behavior, the Army devoted a substantial amount of attention to improving the level of education and training of officers. My Lai defendant Calley, a junior college dropout, was a powerful symbol of what could go wrong when men of low ability were allowed to become officers. Officers were quick to point out that the service had been obliged to commission men like Calley because better-educated young men had shirked the responsibility of service. As Westmoreland saw it, "Had it not been for educational draft deferments, which prevented the Army from drawing upon the intellectual segment of society for its junior officers, Calley probably never would have been an officer." Westmoreland concluded that the Army and the Congress, which designed the

⁶⁶ Gen. Ralph E. Haines, Jr., interview with Captain William J. Hudson, Senior Officer Oral History Project, USAMHI, Carlisle, Pa., 1976, Sec.II p. 28.

educational deferment policy, both deserved blame for the commissioning of substandard individuals. In hindsight, he declared, "It would have been better to have gone short of officers than to have accepted applicants whose credentials left a question as to their potential as leaders."⁶⁷

In order to reduce the potential for a poorly qualified man disgracing the uniform in the future, the Army raised educational requirements for officers after 1970. The Army's gradual withdrawal from Vietnam greatly facilitated this process, as the demand for officers occasioned by the earlier buildup decreased. During the Vietnam drawdown, the service had an adequate supply of officers and could afford to be selective. As a result, only men with four years of college experience would be admitted to Officer Candidate School. While a college degree did little to directly prepare a man for officership, the Army believed that a completed degree was an indicator of the level of character and intellectual ability required of officers. By 1972, approximately 92 percent of the officer corps held baccalaureate degrees, while 20 percent held advanced degrees.⁶⁸

With the relationship between professional skills and professional ethical behavior firmly established, improving the quality of training in technical competence became a crucial element in the Army's plan to restore professionalism. The reorganization of the Continental Army Command and Combat Development Command in 1973, resulting in the creation of two new organizations, the Forces Command (FORSCOM) and the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), was a major reform. TRADOC's creation centralized under a single agency the mission of creating Army doctrine and integrating it with appropriate training. Under the command of General William DePuy, an intellectually gifted officer with a reputation for both

⁶⁷ Gen. William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976), 378.

⁶⁸ Drew Middleton, "Army is Confident That, After Years of Crisis, Officers Are Regaining Stability, Quality and Morale," *New York Times*, 6 July 1972, p. 19. W.C. Westmoreland, "The Army's Strength," *New York Times*, 10 March 1972, p. 37.

innovation and ruthlessness, TRADOC began the process of rebuilding the Army's training base. Training had been neglected during the Vietnam war, in large part because of personnel turbulence. With Vietnam units claiming thousands of enlisted personnel, non-Vietnam units often found themselves lacking the people for unit training. Coupled with Vietnam's demands on the Army's supply of officers and experienced NCO's, substantial unit training was next to impossible.⁶⁹ While turbulence declined as the Army withdrew from Vietnam, the Army's training procedures were clearly in need of revision. General DePuy reported later that, "when I first visited the schools and the training centers I was unimpressed. The orientation was very academic, very intellectual..." Concerned that the Army was neglecting instruction in practical tasks, DePuy set out to alter the balance. While he acknowledged that both theoretical and hands-on learning were important, DePuy felt that the situation demanded an emphasis on practical training.⁷⁰

During his tenure as TRADOC commander, DePuy instituted a revolutionary system of performance-oriented training that came to be known as "Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP). Since the First World War, the Army's mobilization-oriented Army Training Program (ATP) had rested on the concept of moving large numbers of raw recruits through the training system quickly. Training proceeded on a tight time schedule, with each task assigned a specified amount of time for instruction. In an era of limited war and the All Volunteer Force, the ATP had outlived its usefulness. DePuy's ARTEP concept, which replaced it, exchanged the time-based training system for what he called "performance-based training." Performance-based training defined standards to which men and units would be held, and established evaluation systems to determine whether they met the standards. Training continued

⁶⁹ See William Beecher, "82d Airborne Weakened by Manpower Cutbacks," *New York Times*, 25 December 1970, p. 1 for a good example. A good discussion of the turbulence phenomenon can be found in Lloyd Norman, "Turbulence and Army Readiness," *Army* 21, no.7 (July 1971): 10-14.

⁷⁰ Gen. William E. DePuy, *Changing an Army: An Oral History of General William E. DePuy, USA Retired*, interview with COL Romie L. Brownlee and BG William J. Mullen III, Senior Officer Debriefing Program, USAMHI, Carlisle, Pa., 1979, 182.

until the standards were met. This relatively simple concept proved vastly more effective than the old system in achieving the Army's goals for individual and unit performance.⁷¹

In a move more specifically directed at its ethics problem, the Army moved quickly after My Lai to strengthen its instruction in the laws of war for officer candidates. The Army had always conducted training in the treatment of prisoners, civilians, and other legal/ethical issues involved in combat, but the program was limited to a one-hour lecture focused largely on rules and failed to show how they might come into play in the field. The program left many men unaware of the possibility that they could face court martial if they followed an order that was illegal. As early as 1967, a study undertaken at the behest of then Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor showed that the Army's training in the laws of war was inadequate--many second lieutenants surveyed believed that torture was a legitimate means of interrogation and killing prisoners was acceptable in some circumstances. Little was done to address the shortcomings of the system until My Lai brought the problem into sharp, tragic focus.⁷²

After My Lai, the program was substantially revised. While the Army increased the time allotted for instruction only to two hours, the content was substantially upgraded. The training program now described the laws of warfare by focusing on potentially dangerous situations that young lieutenants might face. The rules were laid out for the treatment of prisoners and noncombatants, emphasizing officers' responsibility to protect private property, the necessity of distinguishing between legal and illegal orders, rules of engagement, and the importance of war crimes reporting procedures.⁷³ As a *Washington Post* article noted, "The rules are laid down in blunt language: Do not shoot prisoners or cut off ears or push suspects out of helicopters or torture captives under interrogation. Even if the captain orders it, don't do it. These

⁷¹ Ibid., 194, 202; Anne W. Chapman, "The Origins and Development of the National Training Center, 1976-1984," (Ft. Monroe, Va.: Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1992), 6-8.

⁷² William Greider, "Teaching of War Law Revitalized by Army," *Washington Post*, 14 February 1971, p. A1.

⁷³ *DAHSUM 1970*, 28.

rules are orders from the top--the President, the Congress, the Joint Chiefs. No field commander can change them."⁷⁴ A videotape which graphically illustrated potential war crimes situations accompanied the presentation, which was now administered by a team including a lawyer to explain the legal aspects and an officer with combat command experience to explain how the war laws might come into play in tactical situations. The Army also endeavored to include laws of war training situations in tactical training exercises and expanded its annual refresher training on the subject.⁷⁵

By 1974, the Army believed that its strengthened training program had made progress in strengthening its standards of moral conduct in combat. Although it was unfortunate that it took My Lai to spur the Army to strengthen its war crimes training, the service made a sincere and effective effort to minimize the chances of another atrocity of similar magnitude. Secretary of the Army Howard Callaway affirmed that, "I do not guess any one thing is going to prevent [another incident like My Lai], but I do feel sure that it won't happen again. Our training takes into account what happened at My Lai and takes into account the seriousness of it."⁷⁶

Personnel Reforms:

The centerpiece of the Army's strategy to control careerism was the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS). Setting out to address the overabundance of "jacks of all trades and masters of none" developed by the generalist career management system, the Chief of Staff initiated the program in August of 1970. Reacting to the revelations of the damaging effects of careerism in the *Study on Military Professionalism*, OPMS was an effort to redesign the career management system to emphasize technical specialization as a legitimate alternative to troop command. The goal, as the Army's official history phrased it, was to "increase professional competence through greater regard for specialization and concentrated assignment patterns, ensure

⁷⁴ Greider, "Teaching of War Law," p. A1.

⁷⁵ *DAHSUM 1970*, 28. "Army Movie Aims to Avoid a My Lai," *New York Times*, 15 December 1974, p. 62

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 62.

equitable opportunity for advancement by providing multiple pathways to success, and improve career satisfaction by allowing an officer more voice in career development to do the jobs he does best." OPMS proposed to achieve this goal by making each officer choose two areas of specialization, a primary and a secondary. Troop command at battalion level and above was to be made a specialty like logistics, personnel administration, or intelligence rather than a fundamental element of all officers' experience. The system was designed to reduce competition for command jobs and allow officers to master the knowledge required by his areas of specialization. The plan allowed for separation with a one-time payment for Regular Army officers with twelve years of service in order to eliminate the substantial group of officers who, with no real hope of being promoted, stayed in the Army while doing a minimum of productive work so that they could complete their twenty years and qualify for retirement pay. Other elements of the plan included further reforms of the Army's officer education system, training and promotion policies.⁷⁷

The OPMS plan was in for a turbulent future, however, as many officers were reluctant to do away with the existing system. Retired Chief of Staff Gen. Harold K. Johnson spoke for many officers when he voiced reservations about the plan: "I don't think the dual track system will work. . . for the simple reason that somebody has to perform the primary function of the Army, to fight. The specialists cannot expect to enjoy the same prerequisites and the same status as the troop commander because the penalties for failure in troop command involve human lives and the penalties in their specialty rarely does."⁷⁸ The trouble with Johnson's thinking was that the Army had far more would-be combat arms commanders than it had units, and simultaneously had a

⁷⁷ W.C. Westmoreland, "The Army's Strength," *New York Times*, 10 March 1972, p. 37; *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1972 [DAHSUM 1972]*, (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Army Center of Military History, 1974), 80; Loory, *Defeated*, 91-94. For Westmoreland's personal recollections about his reasoning behind the OPMS project, see Westmoreland SOOHP, Vol. II , 51-52.

⁷⁸ Gen. Harold K. Johnson, interview with Lt. Col. Rupert F. Glover, Senior Officer Debriefing Program, USAMHI, Carlisle, Pa., 22 January 1973, 22-23.

shortage of professional technical experts. The OPMS system had the potential to address this disparity. OPMS proponents concluded that time was of the essence, however: the approaching end of the Vietnam war could produce a fluid atmosphere conducive to rapid change or it could lead to a letdown in morale and professionalism, inducing good officers to leave the service and discouraging good men from becoming officers. As then Lt. Colonels William L. Hauser and Zeb B. Bradford Jr. warned in a December 1971 *Army* magazine article supporting OPMS, ". . . things are quite likely to get worse in the officer corps unless action is taken now."⁷⁹

When the OPMS plan was submitted to senior officers for review in late 1971, however, it met with implacable resistance from traditionalist officers who thought that the system that had resulted in their own promotion to high rank was fundamentally sound. As one of the officers involved in drafting the plan told civilian journalist Stuart Loory:

"Two groups of critics killed it. First there were the old generals who took the attitude that there's nothing wrong with the system. 'We made it,' they said, 'so it can't be very bad.' Then there was the group of old colonels who did not make it. 'If we couldn't do it,' they said, 'nobody else will either.' Everyone took the attitude that OPMS was the doing of some young punks looking for a way to milk the system."⁸⁰

In an attempt to salvage some of the reform momentum that had been lost, the Chief of Staff finally settled on a watered-down version of OPMS. Known within staff circles in Washington as "OPMS II," it was publicly presented simply as OPMS, since most officers were unaware of the conflict-ridden evolution of the program. The OPMS that finally went into effect in 1972 was an improvement over the old system, but was decidedly evolutionary in nature. The most important change was centralization of command selection for lieutenant colonels and colonels under a special Department of the Army board. Civilian author Stuart Loory described the system well in his 1973 broadside for military reform, *Defeated: Inside America's Military Machine* : "The

⁷⁹ LTC William L. Hauser and LTC Zeb B. Bradford, Jr., "Officer Corps Reform Is Our Job," *Army* 21, no.12 (December 1971): 39.

⁸⁰ Loory, 92.

boards each year would select only enough officers to fill command jobs opening up during the coming year.... A colonel not selected for command under the new system knew that the opportunity would be denied him permanently.... With OPMS II in effect, men selected for command knew they would get a job and men not selected knew that whatever amount of pressure they brought to bear on OPO [Office of Personnel Operations] would be useless." The goal was to separate out the potential commanders and encourage the rest of the officers to concentrate on their professional tasks rather than politicking for command positions that better-qualified officers had already been selected for.⁸¹

OPMS cut down on competition for higher level command positions, but it failed to adequately address career planning issues for younger officers. The position of colonels and lieutenant colonels in the new system was unequivocal, but the system did little to discourage the competition among more junior officers for records that would qualify them for command at the field grade level. A significant part of the problem was the fact that "OPMS II" as it was instituted watered down the original plan's measures for equalizing promotion rates for non-combat arms command officers. Officers still felt compelled to seek troop command at the battalion and brigade levels as a prerequisite for eventually winning general's stars. Thus a majority of officers would continue to spend more than a decade preparing for battalion commands that they would never get, then have to change their career goals after fifteen years or more of service. One major observed that, "command is so important for career success that most officers have been psychologically forced to equate command expectations with career aspirations."⁸² In an effort to address this problem, the OPMS system was altered in

⁸¹ *DAHSUM* 1972, .80. Loory, *Defeated*, 93-94.

⁸² Maj. Phillip W. Mock, "Delusions of Grandeur: Career Assignment Patterns and Goals of Active Duty Majors in USACGSC Class of 1971-1972," *Military Review* 52, no.10 (October 1972): 58. Mock conducted a survey on the majors in his 1971-1972 CGSC class which led him to conclude that far too many men expected command--he noted that 90 percent expected to receive battalion commands, while statistics indicated that only 33 percent actually would be selected. Mock concluded that officers' deep-seated expectations of command were a major obstacle to successful implementation of OPMS--see Mock, "Delusions of Grandeur," 57-58, 64.

1975 to induce company grade officers to select an OPMS technical specialty in their seventh year of service, which for most officers at the time would have been in the middle to senior captain range.⁸³

Implementation of early selection of OPMS specialty was a positive step toward reducing competition for command positions, but its success depended upon officers' believing that specialists would really not be discriminated against in promotion. The reality was that the watered-down language of OPMS gave few young officers confidence in the Army's commitment to non-commanders.⁸⁴ Some senior officers recognized the credibility gap inherent in the OPMS system. As General Michael S. Davison reported from his command in Europe to General Creighton Abrams, who had replaced Westmoreland as Chief of Staff in October of 1972:

I view credibility as the major obstacle to OPMS.... I have already noted some doubt among officers that previous demonstrated command performance was the real basis for selection to command. Furthermore, there is some feeling that command in combat was not given preference over command elsewhere.... If dual skill development is to be successful, we must first assure that only the very best qualified officers are selected for troop command by truly impartial boards, while visibly demonstrating to all that specialties other than troop command can provide a pathway to a successful career. Above all, the integrity of the system must be beyond reproach."⁸⁵

⁸³ LTG Harold G. Moore, DCSPER, "A Busy Year of the 'Hard Look' at People Policies," *Army* 25, no.10 (Army Green Book 1975): 44-45. Rank at seven years service based on *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1973* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1975) [*DAHSUM 1975*], 67.

⁸⁴ A survey of his 1975 CGSC class conducted by Maj. Gerald Chapman, Jr. suggests that this attitude persisted through the first three years of OPMS. Investigating the possible effects of a policy of early identification of potential commanders somewhat similar to that which was actually established by DCSPER in October of 1975, Chapman found that if not selected for "command track," 8 percent of his class would resign outright, 23 percent would consider resigning, and 16 percent would remain in the service without strong motivation; 46 percent would go enthusiastically into their new specialty with little hope of promotion, while 6 percent would do so while expecting promotion. See Maj. Gerald Chapman, "Developing the Combat Arms Battalion Commander," *Military Review* 55 no.10 (October 1975): 69-77. Adding to officers' distrust of the system was the continued focus of the military education system on the needs of generalist commanders. See Maj. Robert E. Shea, Jr., "The Pathway to Progress: An Examination of the Credibility of Military Education," *Military Review* 55, no.3 (March 1975): 81-88.

⁸⁵ Gen Michael S. Davison CINCUSAREUR to CSA Creighton W. Abrams, letter, 5 June 1973, Creighton W. Abrams Papers, "Alphabetic Correspondence, Generals, Chief of Staff: Davison," U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

Davison was a proponent of OPMS, but it was evident from his analysis of its problems that he still numbered among those who believed that combat command was more important than technical positions.

While OPMS was the most prominent change in the personnel system, a number of other actions were also taken with the intent of reducing career pressures. The redesign of the Officer Efficiency Report was thought to be an important step toward this goal. To address the problem of OER inflation, Westmoreland ordered the form redesigned in 1972. Changes included new questions designed to elicit information on the rated officer's ethical standards, and the provision that the rated officer would automatically receive a copy of the report rather than making the decision the rater's option as with the old system. Amid high expectations, the new system went into effect in January of 1973.⁸⁶

Despite stern warnings to avoid excessively high ratings delivered by General Creighton Abrams, the new Chief of Staff, the new form quickly succumbed. Officers throughout the Army complained about the negative effects that their efforts to prevent inflation had on their subordinates. Army Forces Command General Walter Kerwin, who as Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel had been responsible for developing the new form, summed up the worries of many other generals: "The greatest concern is that the other guy is not playing the game, therefore the commander has to do the same in order not to hurt his people. If I can somehow assure these people, even with some generalities, that the other guy is getting with the problem, then I thinking [sic] we'll start to make more progress." The goal of creating a new OER had been to start anew and avoid ratings inflation, but within months of its introduction the old problems returned in full force.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ "Army Alters Way to Rate Officers," *New York Times*, 3 January 1973, p. 22. LTG Walter T. Kerwin, DCSPER, "The Focus In 1972 Is On *People*," *Army* 22, no.10 (Army Green Book 1972): 93.

⁸⁷ Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times*, New York (Simon and Schuster, 1992), 356-357; Maj. Thomas A. Fletcher, letter to the editor, *Military Review* 53, no.7 (July 1973): 2; Col. John T. Miller, "Integrity and Reality And Writing Up OERs," *Army*

One action that proved relatively uncontroversial was the decision to lengthen command assignments. In the wake of the criticism that the 6-month command policy in Vietnam had received, tenure for brigade and battalion commanders in most billets were expanded--first to eighteen months and later to twenty-four months. While a few officers opposed this action, lengthening command tours was a crucial element in preparing leaders to deal with the challenges inherent in the drawdown from Vietnam and the institution of the All Volunteer Force concept.⁸⁸

Incomplete Victory:

By 1975, the sense of crisis that had stalked the Army in the early years of the 1970s had subsided. The bitter Vietnam experience was still an open wound, but the U.S. withdrawal--complete by 1973--allowed the Army to shift its attention to rebuilding. Creighton Abrams, who served as Chief of Staff from October 1973 until his untimely death in September of 1974, had imparted a new sense of pride and energy into the Army during his short tenure. As the Army entered the second half of the decade, most of the major disciplinary problems of the Vietnam era were either gone or were being dealt with constructively. The drug problem, while not eliminated, was under control; racial relations councils and training were reducing the level of racial tension; the crime rate on bases, while still substantial, had leveled off and would decline markedly in 1976 and 1977.⁸⁹ The All Volunteer plan appeared to be working satisfactorily, as the Army was meeting its recruiting goals even as it raised standards

27, no.4 (April 1977): 42-44; Gen. Walter Kerwin, CO FORSCOM, to CSA Creighton Abrams, memo, 12 July 1973, Creighton Abrams Papers (Correspondence, Chief of Staff), U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa. Kerwin was overly optimistic, as Abrams ultimately admitted defeat on the inflation issue. Abrams' files include many similar memos from other officers in the months after the institution of the new form.

⁸⁸U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, 92nd Congress, first session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 554-555.

⁸⁹ *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1975* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1978) [DAHSUM 1975], pp.45-47, 50, ; *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1976* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1977) [DAHSUM 1976], 49.

for education and intelligence.⁹⁰ When questioned in 1976 about the Army's major problems at the time, Chief of Staff-designate General Bernard Rogers responded, "Well, it really can be lumped. . . under the broad heading of readiness. . . ," encompassing the acquisition of quality personnel, modern equipment, and the integration of active and reserve forces.⁹¹ The concerns with indiscipline and later with the uncertain prospects of the AVF had been largely overcome, so that the Army was able to concentrate on maximizing its combat readiness and modernizing its forces and doctrine to match the Warsaw Pact in Europe.⁹²

Assessing the positive trends in the service since the early Seventies, the Army's official historical summary for 1976 concluded that, "The overall improvement during this period can be attributed to such factors as the end of the war in Vietnam and the end of the draft, substantial reductions in the total strength of the Army, higher entrance standards for new soldiers, better leadership and personnel management, and more effective programs specifically designed to improve discipline and professionalism throughout the Army."⁹³ This assessment was very positive for the Army on the

⁹⁰ DAHSUM 1975, pp.37-38.

⁹¹ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Nomination of Gen. Bernard W. Rogers to be Army Chief of Staff; et. al.: Hearing Before the Committee on Armed Services*, 94th Congress, 2nd sess., 5 August 1976 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976),.4-5. An unscientific but illuminating sense of the focus on readiness can be gained from scanning the 1975 Army Green Book (*Army* 26 no.10, October 1976) , which in addition to Chief of Staff Fred C. Weyand's report entitled "'Our Strategy Is Readiness': First Battle Is Crucial," included three other reports incorporating the word "readiness" in the title out of a total of fourteen articles. Reading through the articles in the '75 Green Book gives the distinct impression that "readiness" had become the Army's hot topic. Read in retrospect, an introductory note from the *Army* magazine publishers in the 1972 Green Book seems prophetic: in a short note entitled "Getting It All Together" [*Army*. 22 no.10, (October 1972) (*Army Green Book* 1972): .3], the editors noted the improving posture of the Army in 1972--its willingness to try new strategies and accept change--and predicted that the Army was well on its way to overcoming the problems that had seemed so insoluble as recently as 1971. "The voice that comes through is loud and clear: the voice of a winner," the editors wrote. "Stick with us until, say, the Green Book for 1975 and see if we weren't right."

⁹² The Army Military History Institute's oral history of Gen. De Puy, *Changing An Army*, provides a valuable insider's account of the effort to refocus Army organization and planning in the post-Vietnam era. John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973-1982*, Washington, D.C. (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984) traces the Army's efforts to reorient its doctrine to accommodate the changing demands of the defense of Europe. James Kitfield's *Prodigal Soldiers*: is an informative (although anecdotal) account of the transformation of the armed services from their Vietnam nadir to renewed effectiveness and eventually to victory in the Persian Gulf.

⁹³ DAHSUM 1976, p. 50.

surface, but by pointing out the many potential causes of improvement it also indirectly raised questions about the effectiveness of the Army's efforts to improve the ethical standards of the officer corps. Clearly, the Army had made steps toward addressing the shortcomings of professionalism revealed in Vietnam. While the Army had instituted numerous changes, however, reform was largely restricted to addressing the admittedly serious professional competence issue. Few programs focused directly on ethics, and most of those which did concentrated on the "laws of war" aspect of ethics rather than the broader issue of overall officer integrity. The result was that the officer corps as a whole, while markedly improved from the Vietnam period in morale and technical competence, still lacked a clear understanding of professional military ethics that officers could use to guide their behavior.⁹⁴

While the wave of interest in ethical reform had largely passed after 1975, there were several encouraging signs. The Officer Personnel Management System had taken hold, with some positive consequences. The Officer Personnel Directorate was reorganized and expanded in order to facilitate the inclusion of a wider range of OPMS specialties within the officer personnel management structure. The centralized command selection system, originally limited to troop commands, expanded during 1975 to include selection for logistics commands, engineer districts, and project managers. Given the limited scope of the version of OPMS that conservative officers had been willing to accept back in 1972, OPMS was contributing as much as could be expected to limiting careerist pressures.⁹⁵

A major factor drawing the officer corps' attention away from further ethical reform was the sizable reduction in force (RIF) forced upon the officer corps in the wake of Vietnam. Beginning in 1973, the impact of the drawdown expanded over the next several years. In 1973, time in grade required for promotion was increased. In

⁹⁴ Drew Middleton, "Army is Confident That, After Years of Crisis, Officers Are Regaining Stability, Quality and Morale," *New York Times*, 6 July 1972, p. 19.

⁹⁵ Moore, "'Hard Look' at People Policies," 44-45.

1974, 4,900 reserve officers were released from service. Although the Army regretted that many of those released were officers who had performed with distinction in Vietnam, the service weathered the 1974 reduction with little resistance. 1975 struck a major blow, however, as some 3,000 officer positions were eliminated and approximately 900 others downgraded with some 3,500 more positions under study for elimination or downgrading at the end of the year. This time regular officers, who had not been subject to summary personnel reductions throughout the Cold War era, were the victims of the reduction thanks to a change in federal law. Most of the men forced out were junior officers eliminated before they could complete the twenty years required to qualify for retirement pay. Several hundred officers went to court to protest their dismissal. Reflecting on the declining morale of the officer corps in the wake of the reduction, one officer compared the experience to walking across a battlefield: "You see the dead bodies and you are sad but glad you have survived." Those officers who remained after the RIF found themselves in an atmosphere of increased competition. Facing the prospect of being involuntarily eliminated from the service, officers had more pressing concerns than ethical reform.⁹⁶

The issue of ethics within the military reemerged briefly in 1976 and 1977, owing to the discovery and investigation of a major honor scandal at the United States

⁹⁶ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on Cost Escalation In Defense Procurement Contracts and Military Posture and H.R. 6722*, 93rd Congress, first sess. part 1-4., (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), 836; *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1973* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1977), 67; *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1974* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1978), 54-55; *DAHSUM 1975*, 23-24, 40-41; "Out of Commission," *Wall Street Journal*, September 16, 1975, p. 1; "Officer Cutbacks--Why the Fuss?" in *U.S. News and World Report*, (20 October 1975), p. 74. In a Senior Officer Oral History Project interview, Gen. Melvin Zais explained his objection to the RIFing of Regular officers: "There is a procedure by which officers who aren't doing acceptable work can be forced out and it is a very stringent one.... The competition is keen. When you arbitrarily state that 'X' number of people have to be eliminated from the Army because we have to meet an end strength, and you start doing this to Regular Army officers, you are setting a very, very bad precedent." Zais worried that if job security, the one advantage of the Regular officer, was imperiled, officers would lose an important career motivation and good men might either leave the service or remain in the less professionally-oriented Reserve officer track. Gen. Melvin Zais, interview with Col. William L. Golden, USA and Col. Richard C. Rice, Senior Officer Oral History Project 77-3 (Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 1977), 728-729, 730.

Military Academy. The revelation that over a hundred cadets faced expulsion for violating the Academy's Cadet Honor Code alarmed many civilians, who felt that the circumstances surrounding the case justified leniency. Military men pointed out that the rigidity of the cadet honor system was designed to instill unshakable standards of integrity in West Point graduates, the sort of integrity required in combat. The Department of the Army commission appointed to investigate the incident concluded that the spirit of the West Point Honor Code was laudable, but that the code was not effectively explained or enforced. Significantly, after all the talk about ethics in the early 1970s, the commission found that West Point cadets still did not receive adequate instruction in ethics and honor: "Honor instruction to the extent it exists has been almost totally handled by the Cadet Honor Committee. There must be instruction in ethics introduced into the core curriculum, to provide a base for continuing instruction in honor matters." The deficiency of ethical instruction at West Point suggested that in the six years following the *Study on Military Professionalism* the Military Academy had continued to produce future career officers who inadequately understood professional ethics.⁹⁷

There was some evidence that the Army's resistance to exploring ethics in academic contexts was disappearing, however. Providing one of the more encouraging signs regarding the state of ethics in the Army was the expansion of instruction in ethics at the Army War College instituted by its commandant, Lt. Gen. Dewitt C. Smith, between 1974 and 1977. As Smith noted, "We are thinking of the ethical implications of institutional practices," including the "zero defects" and "can-do" mentalities, the body count and other abuses of statistical measures of success, and the ethical failures associated with My Lai. Smith's program at the War College was one of the Army's first attempts to critically engage the concepts of ethics and integrity, an element that had been intentionally neglected during the earlier part of the decade.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ "The West Point Decision," *Army* 27 no.2 (February 1977), 37.

⁹⁸ Georgie Anne Geyer, "Military Soul Searching," *Washington Post* 20 June 1977, p. A21.

Compelling evidence that the officer corps' ethical shortcomings resisted the Army's indirect attempts to address them appeared in a study conducted by Lt. Col. Melville A. Drisko for a student paper at the War College in 1977. Drisko's study, "An analysis of professional military ethics: their importance, development and inculcation," covered much of the same ground as the 1970 *Study on Military Professionalism*, but this time employing an Army-wide sample designed to reflect the officer corps as a whole rather than the elite-oriented sample used in the 1970 study. Drisko's findings were surprising: "The findings reveal a strong feeling of the importance of professional military ethics. Study data show a lack of training programs for more emphasis in these areas. There is a strong identification with 'Duty, Honor, Country' as an acceptable code, but mixed feelings as to the effectiveness of this code in promoting ethical behavior."⁹⁹ The most frequently cited problems, "centered on competitive pressures placed on officers, lack of integrity perceived in senior officers, career survival through statistics, and little tolerance for mistakes."¹⁰⁰ Nearly a third of the respondents believed that unethical behavior often went unpunished, while nearly two thirds believed that ethical behavior frequently went unrewarded. Nearly two thirds of those interviewed believed that the level of instruction in professional ethics in the Army's formal school system was "Non-existent" to "Moderately Ineffective." Overall, 26.4 percent believed that the Army was more unethical than it had been ten years before.¹⁰¹

Drisko's survey, undertaken in the comparative calm of 1977, produced results remarkably similar to those of the 1970 War College study. Noting the similarities, Drisko cited the 1970 study's warning that the ethical problems it revealed in the officer corps were largely internal in origin and were not affected by the Vietnam war or the changes in American society during that era. The implication was clear: while the Army

⁹⁹ Lt. Col. Melville A. Drisko, Jr. "An analysis of professional military ethics: their importance, development and inculcation." U.S. Army War College student paper, 19 June 1977 (USAMHI, Carlisle, Pa.), i.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.31, 33, appendix B-4.

had been able to rebuild once the strain of Vietnam was lifted, the ethical problems that had come to the forefront during the war remained. "The problems are largely generated internally--within the Army itself. . . ," Drisko warned, "and will only be solved as we deal with those problems honestly and directly."¹⁰²

The rebuilding of the Army's professional ethics proved more complicated than the rebuilding of manpower and morale. The Army's reforms up to 1977 focused largely on building up technical competence and only indirectly on ethics. The improved training of the post-war officer corps and the reduction in force had eliminated much of the incompetency that had fueled false reporting during the war, but lack of integrity was still perceived as being a major problem. The second half of the 1970s would witness a gradual renewal of interest in ethics culminating in a focus on ethical issues in the 1980 edition of the *Army Green Book*.¹⁰³

During the mid-Seventies, however, successful ethical reform continued to elude the officer corps. The first wave of efforts to institute ethical reform, while well-intentioned, did not succeed in producing significant change in the Army's ethical standards because senior officers pushing the process failed to actively teach the rest of

¹⁰² Ibid., p.36; Encouragingly, by 1982, when Drisko repeated his study, 26 percent of officers believed that the level of unethical behavior in the service was less than it had been ten years before, a neat reversal from the 1977 results in which 26 percent had perceived the situation as worsening--Ibid., *Replication* pp. 7, 16.

¹⁰³ It should be noted that Col. D.M. "Mike" Malone, one of the two principal authors of the 1970 War College study and a longtime instructor at the War College, argued in an article entitled "The Trailwatcher" [*Army* 31, no.5 (May 1981): 20-24] that the state of professional ethics in the Army improved steadily after 1974, an argument that suggests that periodization plays an important role in how one perceives the development of the ethics issue. Malone cited a 1976 document entitled "Leadership Monograph #8" produced by the Army Administrative Center at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana as an important catalyst in a process of ethical improvement that remained largely *ad hoc* but nonetheless spread gradually by 1980 to the Army's top leadership. Malone, in his position at the War College, was perhaps in a unique position to sense the undercurrents of ethical inquiry in the Army at the time; however, the evidence is clear that, whatever was percolating through the system after 1975, the initiatives taken by the Army during the first half of the Seventies (upon which this study focuses) did not solve the Army's ethical problems. William L. Hauser, in an article entitled "Careerism vs. Professionalism In the Military," *Armed Forces and Society* 10, no.2 (Spring 1984): 449-463, offers a counterpoint to Malone's enthusiastic assessment of the state of professional ethics after 1980. Hauser, retired from the Army in 1979, had changed his views on the Army greatly since his idealistic days in the early Seventies as one of the Army's most prominent proponents of internal professional reform. By 1984, Hauser had decided that the armed services' senior leadership was hopelessly entranced by careerism and that only the intervention of civilian authority could effect necessary changes in the military.

the officer corps the meaning and application of professionalism and ethics. While the Army of the mid-Seventies was considerably more combat-ready than it had been in the early years of the decade, it was only beginning to confront the issues of professional ethics.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

The basic reason that the Army's ethical and professional reforms during the 1970-1975 period remained incomplete was that the the concern with the Vietnam crisis which motivated them was self-limiting. The evidence of widespread unethical behavior and incompetence in the officer corps revealed by the Peers Inquiry and succeeding studies provided an impetus to reform, but the need for change seemed less and less compelling as the worst of the Army's troubles receded. Despite the evidence that the lapse in professionalism had internal roots that predated the war, the Army's response to the Vietnam crisis focused largely on individual problems revealed during the war. The service discerned many individual lessons from its travails in Vietnam, but it traced the source of the problems back to individual policies which had failed in Vietnam rather perceiving a fundamental system-wide ethical and professional problem.

The persistence of a subpar ethical climate would eventually lead the Army to reexamine the issue of ethical reform, but a number of factors combined to limit the scope of reform through the mid-1970s. While high-ranking Army leaders recognized that real leadership shortcomings did indeed exist and that Army policies often contributed to the service's troubles, the Army had several compelling reasons to avoid far-reaching changes. The Army was reluctant to initiate a sweeping program of reform in the tense atmosphere of the waning years of the war because it feared that doing so might be construed as an admission of failure which could further damage the battered

¹⁰⁴ John W. Finney, "Pentagon Plans to Add 3 Divisions: But Full Detailing of Need and Cost to Bring Total to 16 Units is Lacking," *New York Times*, 11 November 1974, p. 14. In sharp contrast to the turbulence and dissent-wracked Army of 1970, in which only 3 divisions met basic combat-readiness goals, all 13 divisions were certified combat ready in 1974 and the Army was planning to deploy three additional divisions using manpower consolidated from unnecessary headquarters and support facilities.

service. Moreover, many senior officers were unwilling to wholly condemn the system in which they had excelled as the source of the problem.

The Army's plan for solving its professional problems thus remained limited to evolutionary changes in individual policies, with the result that unethical and unprofessional behavior remained through the mid 1970s. The Army's reforms, while well-intended and often effective to a point, stopped short of aggressively educating officers as to how to behave ethically. While the leadership made some effort to understand the feelings of the rest of the officer corps about the state of professionalism and ethics in the Army, no wide-ranging exchange of ideas took place, nor was the issue of competition among officers adequately addressed. The end of the crisis atmosphere of the early Seventies satisfied the Army that its limited reforms were adequate, but this assessment was premature. While conditions had improved markedly, the improvement was due as much to stresses removed as to problems solved. The result was that, although the Army of 1977 appeared much more stable on the surface than it had been in 1971, many of the officer corps' underlying ethical and professional problems remained unsolved.

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